

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An apparatus for routing packets from a first network node to a second network node in a data network, comprising:

means for assigning and then sending ~~one or more~~ a unique first node identifier[[s]] (ID[[s]]) to the first node, wherein ~~at least one of the one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] is assigned and sent in response to a request from the first node for an identity assignment, ~~wherein each of the one or more unique first node IDs is assigned by one or more entities other than the first node, and~~ wherein a first virtual private network (VPN) is provisioned by the apparatus for each of the one or more unique first node ID[[s]] and an association between the first VPN and the unique first node ID is maintained by the apparatus ~~is associated with a first virtual private network (VPN);~~

means for receiving a packet from the first node, said packet including the ~~at least one~~ unique first node ID and routing information for routing said packet to a destination address associated with said second node; and

means for routing the received packet to the destination address based on the received routing information, ~~and the received at least one unique first node ID~~ and its association with the first VPN, and the destination address being associated with the first VPN.

2-11. (CANCELLED)

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of routing packets from a first network node to a second network node in a data network, comprising:

assigning and then sending ~~one or more~~ a unique first node identifier[[s]] (ID[[s]]) to the first node, wherein ~~at least one of the one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] is assigned and sent in response to a request from the first node for an identity assignment, ~~wherein each of the one or more unique first node IDs is assigned by one or more entities other than the first node, and~~ wherein a first virtual private network (VPN) is provisioned for each of the one or more unique first node ID[[s]] and an association between the first VPN and the unique first node ID is maintained ~~is associated with a first virtual private network (VPN);~~

receiving a packet from the first node, said packet including ~~the at least one~~ unique first node ID and routing information for routing said packet to a destination address associated with said second node; and

routing the received packet to the destination address based on the received routing information, ~~and the received at least one~~ unique first node ID and its association with the first VPN, and the destination address being associated with the first VPN.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein the first node is a cable modem and the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes a DOCSIS Service ID (SID) and an Internet Protocol (IP) address for the first node, wherein the request is a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) request, wherein the IP address is assigned and sent in response to the DHCP request and based on a media access control (MAC) address of the first node as specified in the DHCP request.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the assigning and then sending of the IP address to the first node comprises:

forwarding the DHCP request from a cable modem termination system (CMTS) to a DHCP server;

receiving at the CMTS a DHCP response, including the IP address, from the DHCP server; and

sending the DHCP response, including the IP address, from the CMTS to the first node,

wherein the SID is assigned and sent by the CMTS during a ranging process between the first node and the CMTS.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes an Internet Protocol (IP) address for the first node, wherein the request is a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) request, wherein the IP address is assigned and sent in response to the DHCP request and based on a media access control (MAC) address of the first node as specified in the DHCP request.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the received packet is routed to the second node in a manner that does not cause the received packet to be routed through a VPN customer edge device.

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the received packet is routed to the second node in a manner that does not cause the received packet to be routed outside an access network that includes the first and second nodes.
18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes an ID of the first node that is specific to a network on which the first and second network nodes reside.
19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes a DOCSIS Service ID for the first node.
20. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] IDs includes a MAC address of the first node.
21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes an IP address associated with the first node.
22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the first VPN uses a Multiprotocol Label Switching Protocol (MPLS).
23. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An apparatus for routing packets from a first network node to a second network node in a data network, comprising:
- one or more processors;
  - one or more memory, wherein at least one of the processors or memory are configured for:
    - assigning and then sending ~~one or more~~ a unique first node identifier[[s]] (ID[[s]]) to the first node, wherein ~~at least one of the one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] is assigned and sent in response to a request from the first node for an identity assignment, ~~wherein each of the one or more unique first node IDs is assigned by one or more entities other than the first node~~, and wherein a first virtual private network (VPN) is provisioned by the apparatus for each of the one or more unique first node ID[[s]] and an association between the first VPN and the unique first node ID is maintained by the apparatus ~~is associated with a first virtual private network (VPN)~~;
    - receiving a packet from the first node, said packet including the ~~at least one~~ unique first node ID and routing information for routing said packet to a destination address associated with said second node; and

routing the received packet to the destination address based on the received routing information, ~~and the received at least one~~ unique first node ID and its association with the first VPN, and the destination address being associated with the first VPN.

24. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the first node is a cable modem and the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes a DOCSIS Service ID (SID) and an Internet Protocol (IP) address for the first node, wherein the request is a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) request, wherein the IP address is assigned and sent in response to the DHCP request and based on a media access control (MAC) address of the first node as specified in the DHCP request.

25. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the apparatus is in the form of a cable modem termination system (CMTS) and the assigning and then sending of the IP address to the first node comprises:

forwarding the DHCP request from the CMTS to a DHCP server;

receiving at the CMTS a DHCP response, including the IP address, from the DHCP server;  
and

sending the DHCP response, including the IP address, from the CMTS to the first node,

wherein the SID is assigned and sent by the CMTS during a ranging process between the first node and the CMTS.

26. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes an Internet Protocol (IP) address for the first node, wherein the request is a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) request, wherein the IP address is assigned and sent in response to the DHCP request and based on a media access control (MAC) address of the first node as specified in the DHCP request.

27. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the received packet is routed to the second node in a manner that does not cause the received packet to be routed through a VPN customer edge device.

28. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the received packet is routed to the second node in a manner that does not cause the received packet to be routed outside an access network that includes the first and second nodes.

29. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes an ID of the first node that is specific to a network on which the first and second network nodes reside.
30. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes a DOCSIS Service ID for the first node.
31. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes a MAC address of the first node.
32. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] includes an IP address associated with the first node.
33. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the first VPN uses a Multiprotocol Label Switching Protocol (MPLS).
34. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 12, wherein each of the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] is associated with the first VPN so as to specify the first node as a member of the first VPN and wherein the received packet is only routed to the destination address if the destination address is also associated with the first VPN so as to specify a device at the destination address as a member of the first VPN.
35. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein each of the ~~one or more~~ unique first node ID[[s]] is associated with the first VPN so as to specify the first node as a member of the first VPN and wherein the received packet is only routed to the destination address if the destination address is also associated with the first VPN so as to specify a device at the destination address as a member of the first VPN.